

# PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT MATTERS

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET  
Fairfax County, Virginia

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## WE'RE #1

*(and getting better all the time!)*

By now, everyone who works for Fairfax County government should be aware that the County received the highest marks in the Government Performance Project's recent Grading the Counties effort. Fairfax County was one of only two among the 40 large counties studied to receive an overall grade of A-. The Government Performance Project (GPP) represents a collaboration between the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University and Governing magazine to study five areas of management—Financial, Capital, Information Technology, Human Resources, and Managing for Results. Incredibly, Fairfax was the only county to receive no lower than A- in any of the five categories.

So what does this mean? For starters, it means recognition of the considerable effort that goes into the behind-the-scenes management of a large county. Typically, Fairfax County is singled out for award-winning programs in various line agencies such as Health, Police, Solid Waste, etc. The GPP is unique in that it involved an in-depth review and evaluation of counties' overall management policies and practices.

Fairfax County responded to the written survey and requirement to provide back-up documentation by sending over 15,000 pages of material to demonstrate how management in each of the five areas is addressed. Staff and students at the Maxwell School combed through the voluminous data submitted. One of the reasons counties were required to submit so much material was to demonstrate that they were in fact doing the practices they indicated in the written survey. An example of this is if a jurisdiction says it has a performance measurement program, can it provide documentation demonstrating the program's methodology, training materials, and most importantly of all—the actual measures?

Later in September 2001, a journalist from Governing magazine spent a day and

half interviewing senior management to obtain clarification on various issues. This lengthy process, which began in April 2001, did not end until the grades arrived on January 28, 2002.

"I am immensely pleased and proud that the dedication and hard work of our employees have been recognized," stated County Executive Anthony H. Griffin on receiving word of the results. The County Executive has had as one of his priorities ensuring that Fairfax County remains a high performance organization (HPO). In order to sustain this initiative, hundreds of County employees starting with agency directors, attend HPO training as part of the LEAD Program (Leading, Educating and Developing) offered by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service of the University of Virginia. It is one thing to attend the training and quite another to implement the practices. Yet a number of managers and now other County staff are doing just that. In case you are wondering what a high performance organization is, the simplest way to describe it is "doing the right thing" (effectiveness) and "doing it right" (efficiency). This is where performance measurement comes in because it is the tool that tells how efficient and effective programs are. High performance organizations provide quality and customer value as well as financial performance, and have the data to prove it.

It is noteworthy that one of the areas for which Fairfax County was particularly recognized by the GPP was Managing for Results. This encompasses measuring performance and taking steps to continuously improve. Since 1997, the County has maintained a rigorous system of tracking, reporting, and using performance measures. The most effective managers are those who know how well their programs are doing because they monitor key measures. Depending on the situation, this may be on a daily, monthly, or quarterly basis. Regular review is essential in order to improve. If a

manager only looks at the data at the end of the year, he/she has missed the opportunity to enhance performance and meet or exceed targets.

As the County faces even more budget constraints, achieving and demonstrating results becomes yet more critical. Citizens expect it; the Board of Supervisors expects it; and indeed County employees expect it. Using all the tools in the continuous improvement toolbox such as performance measurement, benchmarking, process redesign, etc. will be the standard practice for local government in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. If the results of the Government Performance Project are any indication, Fairfax County should be able to rise to the challenge with equal success.

## MAY BROWNBAG



As noted above, Fairfax County was the best rated County in the Government Performance Project's evaluation known as Grading the Counties. If you want to learn more about this effort, please plan to attend the Performance Measurement Team's quarterly brownbag lunch on **Thursday, May 9, 2002 from noon until 1:00 p.m. in Conference Room 232** of the Government Center. County Executive Tony Griffin will share his thoughts on this topic. Feel free to bring your lunch and come to learn how efforts such as this affect your agency and the County as a whole. Since this is also Public Service Recognition Week, it seems appropriate that Fairfax County employees pause to reflect on how their contributions make the County the top-notch organization it is.

*Performance Measurement Matters* is published quarterly by the PM Team. Editor: Barbara Emerson; Technical Support: Frann Shurnitski, Department of Management and Budget.

Visit the PM Website:

<http://infoweb/DMB/pfmeasure.htm>



"People seldom improve when they have no other model but themselves to copy."

— Peter Drucker



## PM TRAINING

As noted in the January edition of the *Performance Matters* newsletter, the PM Team will be offering the four different classes on June 12-13, 2002 (see schedule below). The Basic PM Class provides an introduction to the PM system that Fairfax County uses, particularly its terminology and methodology. It covers how to develop objectives and the corresponding Family of Measures. The Data Collection and Surveying classes are for those whose job responsibilities require them to use these tools to ensure the integrity and completeness of performance data collected and/or to survey for customer satisfaction. The Managing for Results class is intended for those who are responsible for using the PM system to manage. Its focus is identifying gaps in performance as well as how to close those gaps and enhance performance. A prerequisite for the Managing for Results Class is to have attended the Basic PM Class. All of these classes are half-day and can be registered for by contacting Barbara Emerson of the PM Team at 324-3009 (e-mail BEMERS) by **June 7, 2002**. Registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis. In addition, please note below that the August 1, 2002 Brownbag will be a brief one-hour refresher for those who had the basic training previously, but would benefit from a review, particularly during budget preparation when this information plays a critical role in resource requests.

PM 2002 CALENDAR		
EVENT	DATE/TIME	LOCATION
Basic PM Training	June 12, 2002 8:30-11:30 a.m.	CR 4-5, GC
Data Collection	June 12, 2002 1-3:30 p.m.	CR 4-5, GC
Surveying for Customer Satisfaction	June 13, 2002 8:30-11:30 a.m.	CR 4-5, GC
Managing for Results	June 13, 2002 1-3:30 p.m.	CR 4-5, GC
Brownbag Lunch - Performance Measurement Refresher	August 1, 2002 Noon – 1 p.m.	Room 120C, GC

### WANTED – New PM Team Members

Each year at this time, the Performance Measurement Team solicits interest for new members. The typical term for members is approximately one year, with the option to extend participation. A number of members have commented that it often takes a year to learn the system in order to become fully contributing members. For this reason, many are choosing to stay on for a second year or more. Since most of the current members have elected to stay on the team for another year, there are only 2-3 openings for new members. The following are the requirements and benefits of participating on the PM Team.

#### Qualifications:

Team player  
Commitment to keeping Fairfax County a high performance organization  
Recommended for participation by the agency director

#### Time Commitment:

Preparation for and attendance at regular meetings (2 hours/month)  
Attendance at PM brownbag lunches as available  
Additional time as needed to perform the functions of the team

#### Term of Service:

One year  
(with ability to extend pending the mutual agreement of the team and the agency director)

#### Benefits:

Association with other professionals committed to measuring and improving performance  
Enhanced understanding of the County's PM methodology  
Opportunity to influence the future direction of the effort

If this sounds like something you would be interested in, please send a brief synopsis of your skills and how your participation will benefit you, your agency and the County. Please include this information in a memo from your agency director indicating his/her approval. Forward this to Susan Datta, Director, Department of Management and Budget by **April 26, 2002**. Applicants will be notified shortly thereafter and an orientation will be provided.

If you would like more information, feel free to contact a current team member listed in the January 2002 newsletter available on the Infoweb.



"No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We must learn to see the world anew."

—Albert Einstein